

The Random Jottings of Donald Jay from Nelson in Pendle.

Old Fred's Nettle Beer.

Once upon a time in a quaint countryside village, there lived an eccentric old man named Fred. Fred was known for his love of nature and his adventurous spirit. He spent his days foraging in the nearby hedgerows, gathering wild plants and experimenting with different recipes. His latest fascination was home brewing, and he was determined to create a unique and delightful beverage using the most unexpected ingredients.

Fred's recent discovery was the humble nettle. He had read about its potential in a weathered old recipe book and couldn't resist the idea of making nettle beer. The recipe seemed simple enough, and Fred was excited to give it a try. He gathered his tools, donned his protective gear, and set off to harvest the freshest nettle tops he could find.

Armed with thick clothing, rubber gloves, and a determined spirit, Fred ventured into the nettle patch. Despite his precautions, a sneaky nettle managed to find its way up his trouser leg, leaving him with a prickly reminder of his encounter. Undeterred, Fred persevered, carefully plucking only the young nettle tops, avoiding the bitter older leaves.

Back in his cosy farmhouse kitchen, Fred began the brewing process. He boiled the nettle tops with copper finings, stirring occasionally as the fragrant aroma filled the room. After fifteen minutes, he strained the mixture and transferred it into a sterilized plastic bucket.

With the nettle infusion ready, Fred added sugar, lemon juice, and cream of tartar, ensuring everything dissolved completely. He activated the beer yeast and introduced it to the mixture. Excitement brewed within him as he anticipated the transformation of his nettle concoction into a refreshing and fizzy beverage.

Fred covered the bucket and left it undisturbed for three days, allowing the yeast to work its magic. During this time, he couldn't help but check on the progress, gently releasing the pressure from one of the swing-top bottles to ensure it didn't build up too much.

Finally, the day arrived when Fred deemed his nettle beer ready for consumption. He carefully siphoned the liquid into sterilized swing-top bottles, being mindful not to disturb the sediment that had formed at the bottom of the bucket. The bottles, filled with the effervescent brew, sat on a shelf, waiting to be enjoyed.

As the days passed, Fred eagerly anticipated the moment he would taste the fruits of his labour. One week later, unable to contain his excitement any longer, he selected a bottle and opened it with a satisfying hiss. The aroma of the nettle beer filled the air, and Fred poured himself a glass, admiring its slightly cloudy appearance.

With a sense of achievement, Fred took a sip. The nettle beer had a unique flavour, earthy and refreshing, with a hint of sweetness and a zing from the lemon juice. It was a modest brew but carried the charm of home-made goodness. Fred savoured each sip, appreciating the journey he had embarked on, from foraging in the hedgerows to creating this delightful drink.

Word quickly spread through the village about Old Fred's nettle beer. Curious locals flocked to his farmhouse, eager to taste this intriguing creation. They were enchanted by the eccentric old man and his knack for turning simple ingredients into something extraordinary.

Fred's nettle beer became a local favourite, enjoyed at village gatherings, picnics, and even during the harvest festival. The brew became a symbol of community and the beauty of embracing nature's gifts. Fred shared his recipe freely, encouraging others to explore their own brewing adventures and discover the joy of home-made libations.

And so, Old Fred's nettle beer became a legend in the countryside, a reminder that hidden treasures can be found even in the most unlikely places. Fred's passion for nature and his

unwavering spirit brought happiness to the villagers, forever immortalizing him as the eccentric brewer who turned stinging nettles into liquid gold.

By Donald Jay.